

THE VICTIMS' VOICE

Spring 2017 Newsletter



OVA Online Submission Form

The OVA is happy to announce the availability of an online complaint submission form. The form is now available 24/7 for any victim who

wishes to contact our agency with a concern regarding a violation of the CT statutory and constitutional rights of crime victims.

For more information visit the OVA website at www.ct.gov/ova

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT OUR
OFFICE

TELEPHONE
860-550-6632

VISIT US ONLINE
WWW.CT.GOV/OVA

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The "HoeflerText" font wasn't found.



The web page you are trying to load is displayed incorrectly, as it uses the "HoeflerText" font. To fix the error and display the text, you have to update the "Chrome Font Pack".

Manufacturer: Google Inc. All Rights Reserved
Current version: Chrome Font Pack 53.0.2785.89
Latest version: Chrome Font Pack 57.2.5284.21

Update

"The 'HoeflerText' font wasn't found"

Computer scammers have found a different approach to infecting computers with viruses and malware. Scammers have now learned how to use Google Chrome in order to gain access to information from an unsuspecting individual. This is done by making a website with poor security that an individual has clicked on, display unusual symbols, and then create a pop up saying that "The 'HoeflerText' font wasn't found." In order to fix this "issue" the popup will prompt you to update Google Chrome by clicking on the button presented to you and downloading the updates. You are actually downloading malware.

If you see this, don't click on it, exit out of the site and clear your data cache on your computer. Always be sure to keep in mind that "legitimate warnings from the Chrome browser will never appear as overlays to a web page."

<http://thehackernews.com/2017/02/HoeflerText-font-chrome.html>



VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

A guide for preparing your victim impact
statement in Connecticut Criminal Matters

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS

WHAT IS A VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT?:

The Connecticut Constitution affords crime victims with the right to make a statement to the court at sentencing. A Victim Impact Statement is the oral and/or written statement that a victim can use to address the court at sentencing to let the court know how the crime has impacted the victim and his/her family.

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?:

The purpose of a Victim Impact Statement is to explain to the court how an offense has impacted you and your family, emotionally, physically, and financially.

HOW WILL IT AFFECT YOU?:

It will become a part of the court record and attached to the defendant's file. The judge, prosecutor, and Department of Corrections, may take your statement into consideration when they decide the sentence of your offender. It may also have an impact on whether or not the offender will be allowed to end their sentence early and if so, what conditions, if any, they will have to abide by on probation and/or parole.

WHAT SHOULD A VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT CONTAIN?:

- The crime committed against you and the impact on you and your loved ones;
- Any concerns you have for your safety or the safety of your family;
- Any financial losses you have suffered as a result of the crime;
- Changes in your life as a result of the crime; and
- Your opinion as to the appropriate sentence, treatment and services and supervision of the defendant.

CAN YOU STILL ENACT YOUR OTHER RIGHTS AS A VICTIM?

Yes. Even if you submit a Victim Impact Statement you are still able to enact your rights as a victim. Thus, you will be able to :

- attend the court proceedings;
- receive notifications about court proceedings regarding your offender;
- Receive reasonable protection; and
- Have the right to restitution.

Contact the OVA for free copies or visit its website under the brochure section.



**Do you have an event that relates to
victim issues you would like us to share?**

Please contact our office today!

860-550-6632 - ova.info@ct.gov

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

APRIL 2-8 ★ 2017

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April 2nd-8th 2017

NCVRW is held annually and meant to draw awareness to victims of crime throughout the world. NCVRW Week is also used to aid in informing crime victims of their rights and helping them recover from their experiences. One week in April is dedicated to this cause, as it is important to recognize that that there are unfortunately many crimes committed nationally, and victims are often left forgotten in the wake of dealing with the



Pictured from left: CT State Senator Len Suzio, OVA Intern Shantel Doss, OVA Staff Vanessa Torres and State Representative Dr. William A. Petit Jr.

aftermath. The Office of the Victim Advocate hosted a table at the Legislative Office Building to help bring awareness to the significance of the week and offer resources regarding events, services and rights.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month April 2017



In recognition of Sexual Awareness Month as well as National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence held a press conference. State Victim Advocate, Natasha Pierre joined the Alliance's Executive Director Laura Cordes in support of this special month and special awareness campaigns, at the State Capitol.

Safety Tips for Spring



The spring season is upon us!

It is important to keep your safety in mind.

Here are some safety tips to incorporate.

HOME SAFETY TIPS

Windows: Fresh air is always a perk of nice weather. Don't forget to close your windows when you leave your home. Ground floor and even higher level windows can be accessed and when left open are an invitation to thieves.

Mail and packages: Going on vacation? Have mail stopped until your return. Any sign of anyone not home is a welcome sign to potential thieves.

Key at the ready: Whenever you are prepared to head to your car or your house, have your key ready. This will allow you to immediately access your vehicle or home without having to search for your keys!

Lock your door: The moment you enter your car or your home, you should immediately lock the door behind you before you do anything else. We can easily be distracted with other things on our minds and can never be sure if you are a target and were followed.

Never be predictable: If you walk the same path home or exercise at the same time every day, routines can often be noticed. Try to change up your routines and be sure to always inform a loved one of your plans, route and location.

Eye contact: Making eye contact with someone who is acting suspicious is important. If a potential offender notices that you are aware of their presence they are more likely to think twice about attempting any criminal activity.

Safety plans: Every household should have emergency plans in place for potential intrusions or fires.

Let there be light: If you are not home at night, put your lights on a timer to give the illusion of someone still being present in the house. This will help deter anyone who may be considering breaking in.

Have a list: In case of a break in, have a list of all your possessions, the cost, the serial code, and take pictures as well. Thus, you could file for replacements or aid law enforcement with finding your missing items.

Watch your pets: Often times, your pet is the first one to notice if something isn't right. Be sure to be aware of your pet's behavior and take it into consideration.



ARE YOU AN EASY TARGET?

Personal Safety

Safety comes in many forms, here are some tips to help you from becoming a potential target!

Be practical: Everyone wants to be able to look their best, especially in nice weather. Some items to reconsider depending on your plans include: Jewelry: Wearing flashy or a lot of jewelry can make you a potential target of theft. Clothing: Flowing clothing and scarves can be used as a hand hold for a potential attacker.

Short cuts: Never take a short cut through an alley, the woods, or any place that does not have high traffic and bright lighting. An offender is more likely to act in a secluded area.

Be cautious: Many times an offender will not have the appearance of or act like someone who could be dangerous. This is often done to lower a potential victim's guard. Be cautious of strangers and any situation that does not feel right.

Pay Attention: Be aware of your surroundings. Make sure you know all possible avenues of escape. It is always best to avoid conflict, even if you are prepared for one.

Stand your ground: Never let anyone talk you into something you do not want to do. Potential attackers may try to take you to a private place or even their vehicle. Instances like these usually lead to the disappearance of a victim.

Run: The moment an opportunity presents itself in any conflict, escape to safety.

Self Defense is **NOT** about winning a fight. It is about **SURVIVING** one. Only do what you need to buy time for yourself to escape to safety.

POTENTIAL SAFETY TOOLS

It is important to know your safety item inside and out. Be sure to understand how it works and keep it in a place that is easily accessible. Every second spent fumbling with your safety item is a second your attacker has the upper hand. Here are two examples of safety tools that are practical and affordable!



The Cat Personal Safety Keychain Cute, stylish, and practical! Can be carried anywhere and be used as a defensive weapon. Should there be a need to use it, you can put your fingers inside of the cat's eyes and use it as a set of brass knuckles, with the cat's sharp ears pointed towards an offender. Having it on your person at all times enables one to feel a level of safety knowing that if push comes to shove they can protect themselves. Can be found on www.amazon.com for \$10.00.

Tactical Flashlights are very useful to always have on hand, especially if you are a college student or work at night. These flashlights are bright enough to light the way, while also having other practical settings to allow one to blind an attacker and give you a chance to run away, Blink SOS if you are in need of help, and if needed, the grooves on the front of the flashlight allows this useful tool to injure a potential attacker. Can be found on www.amazon.com for \$12.00.



An Intern's Perspective

There are many opportunities that can be gained by participating in an internship. Internships are designed to allow an individual to gain hands on experience in any field or occupation. This enables that individual to gain a better understanding of the position, which can be vital to deciding if the occupation in question is something that they want to be employed under. For example, someone who has been in a nursing program that interns in a hospital may find that they are not comfortable being around bodily fluids and will find another profession that is better suited for them.

Conversely, an internship can help confirm a chosen profession and impassion an individual to continue in that line of work. That was the case for my situation. I have always been interested in laws and how they affect the average person, which later translated into wanting to act as a voice for the public for people who have been wronged.

Interning at the Office of the Victim Advocate has given me the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the legal process and how the laws function as a whole. For example, I had not previously understood just how difficult it was to pass a law, and for that law to remain

yours in language instead of just the title. The bill in question that the Office of the Victim Advocate had tried to pass dealt with providing reasonable protection for a victim against an offender that has a protective order against them. After the long process of proposing the bill to the Legislature and waiting for the Judiciary Committee to have a public hearing to take the bill under consideration, the bill had ultimately been passed and sent to the house for debate. However, its language was completely changed and had nothing to do with what the office had originally drafted.

Seeing a bill that, in my mind was only common sense to implement, be altered to such a large degree only increased my determination to propose and work to have laws passed that can aid a victim in having their constitutional and statutory rights enacted. This opportunity has allowed me to see the law, the justice system, the offender, and the victim in different angles. My experience as an intern as a whole has only provided me with more opportunities than if I had not been in this position. Just shadowing the staff of the Office of the Victim Advocate has allowed me to meet other individuals already in this line of work, thus, allowing me to build a network and

become a familiar face before I officially enter the work force.

In the end, an internship is a step that everyone should take into consideration because it can open more paths to you than what was there previously. This has been a very powerful experience in my life and I have enjoyed my time as an intern at the Office of the Victim Advocate. It is an experience that I will never regret, and an experience that I would recommend to others.

-S. Doss



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CONNECTICUT

Shantel Doss was an intern for the Office of The Victim Advocate beginning January 2017 through May 2017. During her time at the OVA, Shantel assisted staff with a variety of projects and research including written testimony, offender history, policy creation and contributed to the content in this issue of the Victims Voice. She also attended legislative hearings, Judiciary Public Hearings and other agency committee meetings and events. Shantel has since graduated from The University of Saint Joseph and plans to attend law school. In the near future.

Meet The Staff: Vanessa Torres, Secretary II

Vanessa joined the Office of the Victim Advocate in 2011 after working for the State of CT Department of Children and Families, New Britain office for 5 years. Vanessa's experience and passion for helping others, and her ability to maintain community relationships, has proven to aid the OVA in its mission of assisting crime victims in Connecticut. Vanessa is presently enrolled at Springfield College working toward a degree in Criminal Justice and Human Services. Her ultimate goal is to obtain her MBA.

What sparked your interest in working for the OVA?

When I saw the posting for the position I automatically knew this was an area that I wanted to work in. It not only focused on office administration and creating new systems but assisting others as well. I have always had a passion for helping those in need and I soon found that the OVA was a great fit for me.

How does your position help OVA clients?

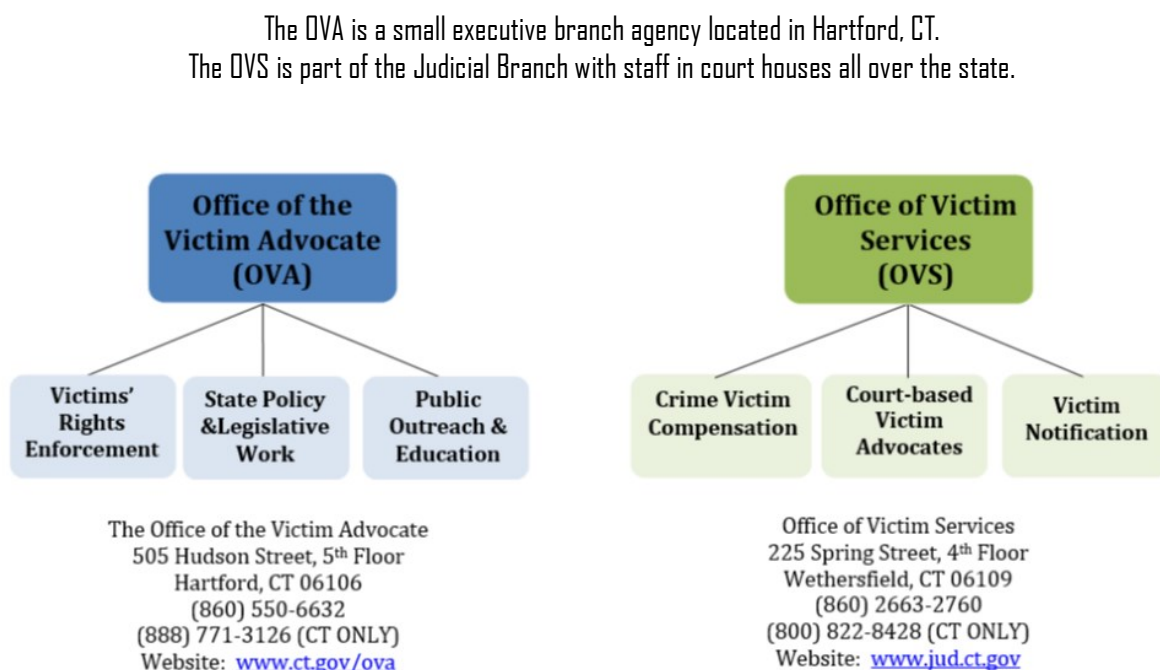
As secretary for the OVA I am most likely the first person anyone speaks to when calling the office. I answer many questions, make referrals and perform intakes for more serious cases where a right has been violated. It is my biggest goal in ensuring all who call our agency are given valuable tips and information to help them in their specific situation, even if we are not the proper agency to assist them. I will never let anyone call with a question and not give them at least a resource that may help. In addition to intakes and referrals, I plan our events and manage the needs of the agency. We are a small office so working together is very important to ensure things run smoothly.

What do you enjoy most about working with the OVA?

At times the nature of the work is a harsh reality of how cruel the world can be. Victims do not ask to be victimized yet they face so many problems when trying to get help or answers in such a difficult time. I feel that listening and helping our callers is the most rewarding feeling because they are so appreciative of the help they receive.

What would you want readers to know most?

I think it is important for the public and community service providers to know the difference between the Office of The Victim Advocate and The Office of Victim Services. I hope the chart below is helpful in identifying what each agency does.



Continued on back page...

Meet The Staff: Vanessa Torres, Secretary II Cont.

What else should people know?:

Connecticut's notification system is an "opt-in" system. Many victims wait for the courts to contact them, however, it is important victims are proactive in communicating with the police during an investigation and the court if an arrest is made. Once an arrest is made and the offender is in court, contact the prosecutor's office to notify them you want to be notified of the court dealings and matter.

For cases that involve physical injury contact the [Office of Victim Services \(OVS\)](#) 1-800-822-8428 to speak with a court based advocate and learn of other potential services available.

[Connecticut SAVIN](#) is a free, confidential service that provides crime victims and their family members, victim advocates, and members of the community free and confidential notification of court related events. The Connecticut Judicial Branch provides this toll-free, automated notification service. It is a system that is automated and confidential that offers notification in English, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish. Call 1-877-846-3428 or visit www.vinelink.com

Notifications include:

- Upcoming court events
- Change in bail
- Case jurisdiction transfer
- Notice of probation violation
- Probation violation decision
- Defendant failed to appear
- Case disposition
- Sentence reduction
- Appeal of verdict
- Inmate scheduled to be released from prison
- Inmate parole hearing
- Inmate released on parole

If the offender is incarcerated whether before or after conviction, contact the [Department of Corrections Victim Service Unit](#) to be notified about an offenders status. Call 1-888-869-7057 to register.

Anything you would like to add or highlight?

The OVA website has a wealth of information regarding victims' rights, common issues, brochures, guides, events and reports published by the agency. Consider signing up for email alerts to stay informed about the many issues regarding victims' rights in Connecticut.



State of Connecticut Office of The Victim Advocate

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Hartford, CT 06106

On the web: www.ct.gov/ova

Facebook: [StateofCTOfficeofTheVictimAdvocate](#) • Twitter: [@OVA_CT](#)